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ART. I.—*Briefe von Joseph dem Zweyten, als charakteristische Beiträge zur Lebens-und Staatsgeschichte dieses unvergesslichen Selbstherrschers.* Bis jetzt ungedruckt. Leipzig. F. A. Brockhaus. 1822.

Letters of Joseph II. Now first published.

Mr. Jefferson, in his letter on the kings of Europe, charges Joseph II. of Austria with insanity. It may be worth the while to give a little time to the consideration of the character of a ruler, about whom opinions have been so much divided. The materials are abundant, and now that the age of revolutions is past, history may be just to the imperial reformer. The prince, for whom Mozart composed music, Kaunitz negotiated, and Laudon won victories, occupies a prominent station among the sovereigns of Austria.

The contrast between monarchies and democratic states is in nothing more striking, than in the degrees and amount of political abilities, which they respectively call into action. Men may dispute, if they will, whether liberty be the fostering parent of the arts, and may continue to raise questions respecting the influence of forms of government on letters; but the turbulent contests, the unsparing and unqualified competition, allowed in popular states, quicken natural talents and furnish every facility and every inducement for their display. At courts the race is not necessarily to the swift; and men are naturally turned aside from the career of the public service, when no scope is furnished them for the full exercise of natural powers and the manly struggle for honors.

Hence it comes that histories of republics, even of small extent, and all republics but our own have been exceedingly limited in territory and in population, are filled with the names and virtues of illustrious men ; and exhibit an activity of intellectual competition, which makes them brilliant with every kind of human distinction. Greece itself was but a small country, the whole of it not so large as one of the larger states in our confederacy ; yet in the short period of its ancient independence, it furnished the world with examples of patriotic worth, that have remained as the acknowledged types of civil greatness. In the best days of Rome, the same results were again exhibited. In later ages, the arts, the prosperity, the commerce of Italy, made it the most opulent portion of Europe, in moral wealth, not less than in its flourishing finances, as long as it remained the most free ; and the decline of heroism was almost contemporary with the cessation of civil emulation and political independence.

We are but repeating truths, which are trite and undisputed ; yet they may still merit to be repeated and explained. The commonwealth of Athens embraced in its immediate jurisdiction the district of Attica only, with one or two small islands ; the whole was not equal to more than one third of the state of Delaware ; and its free inhabitants, according to the most accurate and probable computations, were but about equal, nay, were not quite equal, in number to the present population of Rhode Island. Yet from the days of Miltiades to the death of Demosthenes, what a rapid succession of men of the highest endowments ! Nor were the talents of the greatest of them ever able to secure them from rivals. The contest of parties was fierce ; yet when the popular will had removed one set of men from the public service, the state never suffered in any of its interests ; others were always at hand to command the armies, to direct the fleets, to control the commonwealth. It never will cease to merit admiration, that on one little spot of earth, there should have lived, and almost contemporarily with each other, so many men, in whom mankind continues to take an undiminished interest. The free population of Athens, in its days of glory, was smaller than that of Boston ; and Attica itself is inferior in extent to any one of the larger counties of our commonwealth.

To pursue an analogy or a contrast between the republics of antiquity and our own confederacy, would lead us from our

purpose. The comparisons we have made, were solely for the sake of calling to mind the very small physical force of the countries, which gave birth to modern culture. But were we now to compare Greece with that modern sovereignty, which claims the highest rank, we should find the most surprising points of difference. The imperial house of Austria has been accustomed to take precedence of other European sovereigns. Yet in the long line of those who have stood at its head, in the crowds of its servants in the civil department and in war, how many are there whom humanity would vindicate as her ornaments? How many of them live in the recollection of the world? Eugene, the brightest name in the whole list of the Austrian service, was a foreigner; his associates in power, and the emperors under whom he successively served, were hardly distinguished, except for their rank and their pusillanimity. The history of the republics of Europe, whether of Italy in the middle ages, or of ancient Greece, or of Holland, has a charm, which belongs to no part of the annals of Austria. In the one case, we seem to be travelling in a country where nature has assembled, in close proximity, all that she possesses of the beautiful and the grand; in the other case, as we descend the stream of time, we seem to be sailing down a sluggish current, and are carried through a wide but level country, where hardly a single cliff frowns in solitary grandeur, and a brighter spot is but seldom seen to interrupt the languid gloom of a barren monotony.

This view is forced upon us by the consideration of the whole subject. It is pitiable to see the moral weakness, which seemed at times in the sole possession of the government of the Austrian state; the imbecility, which lost Servia to Christendom, and so repeatedly changed the sovereignty of provinces. But if we pass from considering the merits of those, who made their way to the cabinet of imperial favor, and limit our attention to the talents of the men who have been on the throne, we shall find still less to admire. The Turks are the only nation of Europe, which can show a long succession of sovereigns of superior ability. According to the doctrine of Mr. Jefferson, it must have been because their sovereigns did not intermarry with royalty only; the breed was crossed by the liberty of the seraglio. But a less remote reason may be found in the fact, that the dignity of the sultan was in some measure an elective one; and that the numerous family of the reigning prince always

furnished many candidates for the succession. For the rest, the sovereigns of Christendom, most celebrated for their worth, would, with very few exceptions, have hardly raised themselves above a private station. The reigning princes of the age, whom Mr. Jefferson so unsparingly censures, were considered as an improvement on all that had preceded.

Of the sovereigns of Austria, there is perhaps no one whose praise is more unanimously repeated in the states which she swayed, with affectionate respect, than that of Maria Theresa. But that celebrated woman was superstitious and intolerant; and in other respects, in her acknowledged virtues, resembled any other matron, the fond mother of a large and hopeful* family. She was a faithful wife, a charitable woman, and a spirited regent; but her administration will not be clear without bearing in mind, that she had younger sons to provide for, and daughters to establish; and her favorite minister may have owed a good deal of his influence to his zeal in assisting the empress by all the wiles of diplomacy to marry her daughters well, and introduce into her family the most powerful princes and kings. It is because she was distinguished for the virtues of a wife and a mother, that she has been so much extolled in comparison with Elizabeth of England and Catharine of Russia. If she possessed original genius, a powerful mind, or very extraordinary talents of any kind, history has failed to preserve the clear marks of them. Of the Austrian monarchs, Charles V. is undoubtedly the most known. The panegyrists of royalty, assigning to him all kinds of distinction, claim for him also the merit of a wit. When at Brussels on some gala day, the ladies of the high Spanish and Neapolitan nobility were disputing about precedence in entering a church, 'Let the greatest fool go in first,' was the prompt reproof of imperial petulance. When on another occasion a captain in his service, rather arrogantly boasting of his courage, asserted that he did not know what fear was, 'Then,' said Charles, 'the man never snuffed a candle with his fingers, or he would have been afraid of burning them.' This homely rebuke is much better than the other; and if any one of the sons of Hapsburg ever said a wittier thing, their faithful but rather prosing and time-serving Plutarch has failed to record it.

Royalty itself is in the eyes of its subjects so majestic, that

* She had sixteen children, ten of them daughters.

moderate merit, belonging to it, is sure to be examined through a prism, and to receive a size and a coloring, which are unlike the reality. Does a monarch show a little ability in some one department? He is immediately exalted as a prodigy. Does he gain some crude notions of the benefit of free competition in business, and the nature of civil liberty? The world wonders where he could have gained his wisdom, tacitly acknowledging that the man whom the laws predestine to be a ruler, is least likely to acquire the knowledge necessary for his station. Does he show something of the curiosity, which is felt by thousands of private men, and arrive at some conclusions, which tend to diminish the severity of hereditary injustice? There will never be wanting flatterers or dupes, even among those pretending to be faithful historians, to extol his freedom from antiquated prejudice, and his sure sagacity of judgment.

Is it wonderful then, that there have been many, who have exhibited Joseph II. of Austria as a model of political wisdom and a genuine benefactor of humanity, while others have denounced him as a greedy despot, who assumed the mask of philosophy to disguise the excess of his covetousness, invaded the sacred rights of his subjects under the pretext of a fictitious philanthropy, and pleading a desire to secure the liberties of his subjects, aimed at the consolidation of an unlimited authority?

It cannot but be acceptable, to find that at last a series of his private and confidential letters has been printed. There was already before the public much that the emperor had written; but nothing so peculiar, so bold, and so sincere as may be found in the volume, which has led us to the present discussion. The letters, here communicated, were never intended for the public eye. Hence they are the more interesting and the better worth the public attention. There is a little mystery about the manner in which they came to be printed; but their authenticity is not questioned.

We shall allow the Emperor to speak for himself, giving a series of extracts from letters, which extend from his election to the rank of king of the Romans to the latter part of his life. Europe is still so divided by parties, that there the merit of any individual, whose influence is connected nearly or remotely with the French revolution, can hardly be justly appreciated. But in America no interest can exist, except to do justice; and in a country where there is no distinction of ranks, and no res-

pect of persons, it will give general pleasure if, on removing the splendid exterior of royalty, there should be found under its costly apparel the virtues of a man.

To the Grand Chancellor of the Empire, on being elected King of the Romans.

It is my sole wish, that my abilities may be sufficiently suited to the circumstances and to the dignity conferred on me. On the uprightness of my character, the sincerity of my designs, and my determination to maintain our national freedom, you may place implicit reliance. *****

Frankfort, April, 1764.

To Charles, Prince of Balthyan.

My dear Prince,—We travelled in company of the Grand Duke of Florence and the two Arch Duchesses Anna and Christina, to Inspruck, to be present at the marriage of my brother, when on the 18th, the melancholy catastrophe occurred; the emperor was suddenly struck with apoplexy, and expired in my arms.

My dear Prince, it is beyond the ability of a human being to depict the high degree of grief, the excess of sensations so clearly, as the heart of a son feels them on losing his father, by whom he was convinced that he was loved.

* * * * *

I am now four and twenty years of age. Providence has in my early days given me to drink of the cup of affliction; for I lost my wife after I had possessed her hardly three years.—Dear Eliza! you will never be forgotten by me—and since your death I have felt sorrows that cannot be expressed. *****

Inspruck, August 20, 1765.

To one of the Generals in the Imperial Service.

General!—Put Count Von K. and Captain W. instantly under arrest. The Count is quick, young, proud of his birth, and full of false notions of honor. Captain W. is a veteran soldier, who insists on setting every matter right with sword and pistols; and who at once treated the challenge of the young Count with passion.

I wish, and will suffer no duel in my army; I despise the principles of those who defend the practice, who seek to justify it, and who shoot each other in cold blood.

When I have officers who bravely expose themselves to every danger from the enemy, who on every occasion that arises, display spirit, courage, and decision in attack and in defence, I

prize them highly ; the indifference, which at such seasons they manifest for death, serves their country and advances their honor.

But should there be among them men, who are ready to sacrifice every thing to revenge and hatred of their enemy, I despise them ; I hold such men to be no better than Roman gladiators.

Institute a court martial on these two officers, with the impartiality which I require in every judge ; investigate the subject of their contest ; and let the one who is most to blame, be the sacrifice of his destiny and the laws.

Such a barbarous custom, which is suited to the age of the Tamerlanes and the Bajazets, and which has often had such melancholy effects upon single families, I will suppress and punish, though it should cost me the half of my officers. There yet live men, who unite loyalty with heroism ; but none can do this who do not respect the laws of the state,

August, 1771.

The letters which follow, will illustrate the Emperor's manner of thinking on the subject of religion, at the time when his mother was still at the head of affairs, and himself nominally her colleague.

To the Duke de Choiseul.

Sir,—For your confidence I thank you. You could count upon my support if I were ruler, and you have my entire approbation in respect to the Jesuits, and the plan for the abolition of their order.

Do not reckon much on my mother ; the attachment to this order has become hereditary in the family of Hapsburg. Clement XIV. himself has proofs of it.

Yet Kaunitz is your friend ; he has unlimited influence with the empress ; he agrees with you and the marquis of Pombal as to their dissolution ; and he is a man who leaves nothing half executed.

Choiseul ! I know these people as well as any one ; I know all their designs, which they have carried into effect, their efforts to spread darkness over the earth, and to govern Europe from Cape Finisterre to the North Sea.

In Germany they were mandarins, in France academicians, courtiers, and confessors, in Spain and Portugal grandees of the nation, and in Paraguay kings.

January, 1770.

To the Count de Aranda.

* * * * *

An institution, which the enthusiastic imagination of a Spanish veteran devised in one of the southern countries of Europe, which aimed at universal dominion over the human mind, and with this purpose strove to subject every thing to the infallible senate of the Lateran, could not but be a wretched gift for the present race of Germans.

The syndrium of these Loyolites made their fame, the extension of their greatness, and the darkness of the rest of the world, the first object of their plans.

Their intolerance was the cause why Germany had to endure the misery of a thirty years' war. Their principles deprived the Henrys of France of life and crown; and they were the authors of the edict of Nantz.

The mighty influence which they exercised over the princes of the house of Hapsburg, is too well known. Ferdinand II. and Leopold I. were their protectors to the last breath of their lives.

The education of youth, literature, rewards, the disposal of the highest dignities in the state, the ear of kings, and the heart of queens, every thing was entrusted to their wise direction.

* * * * *

If I were capable of hatred, I could not but hate the race of men, who persecuted a Fenelon, and who produced the *Bulla in coena Domini*.

Vienna, July, 1773.

The communication to Frederic is in a new style of diplomacy. It was occasioned by the war, into which the aged hero believed himself compelled to enter, to prevent the incorporation of Bavaria with the hereditary states of Austria. Hostilities were terminated by the peace of Teschen, before any very brilliant achievements on either side.

To Frederic II. King of Prussia.

* * * * *

It seems to me you bear it too much in mind, that you are a successful general; that you have 200,000 well trained soldiers, and a colonel who has written a commentary on the work of *Cæsar de bello Gallico*. Providence has given as much to several other powers beside Prussia. If your majesty finds pleasure in leading 200,000 men to the battle field, I will meet you with as many. Will you try if you are still a successful general? I am ready to satisfy your love of fighting; and finally,

as to writing books on the art of war, I could name to your Majesty a couple of generals of mine, who have retired on pensions, and who from mere *ennui*, are commenting on the commentaries of the Count de Saxe.

I hope to find you on the banks of the Elbe; and when we have battled it, and given Europe a comedy of obstinacy, we will sheathe the sword.

Je savais bien que vous étiez fâché contre moi.

Jaronius, July, 1778.

To one of his Friends.

* * * * *

With this view Teschen was fixed upon as the place for the Congress. Upon this a great number of ambassadors appeared, and with vast wisdom toiled for three whole months at a peace, which leaves to Austria a small portion of Bavaria, that had already been acquired.

They did not fail to make the advantages of it appear very plain to the Empress, my mother, and to show the power of the King through a prism. Upon this they saluted each other with a world of compliments; and at Vienna sung and fired 99,000 Te Deums.

True, to spare the Empress pain, I confirmed the peace, and gave guaranties. But herein I can only compare my conduct with that of Charles V. in Africa, who returned to Spain with his fleet after a disgraceful campaign; he too went on board ship, but he was the last who did so. * * * *

Live contented as a sage; enjoy the attractions of your private station; and above all things, do not envy the felicity of kings.

Vienna, May, 1779.

Thus far Joseph was but an associate in power. We shall now see how he writes, as autocrat and emperor.

To the Duke de Choiseul.

*** The influence, which the clergy possessed during the reign of my mother, will be another object of my reforms. I do not like to see, that people, to whom the care of the future life is committed, give themselves so much trouble, to make our life here below an object for their wisdom. ****

Vienna, December, 1780.

To the Archbishop of Salzburg.

*** The internal administration of my states demands a reformation without delay. An empire which I govern, must be ruled according to my principles; prejudice, fanaticism, partial-

ity, and slavery of the mind, must be suppressed, and each of my subjects put in the enjoyment of his native liberties.

The monastic life has gained too much the ascendant in Austria; the number of foundations and cloisters has increased extraordinarily.—When I have torn away the veil from the monastic life, when I have banished the Arachne's web of ascetic doctrines from the lecture-rooms of my universities, and transformed the mere contemplative monk into the active citizen, then perhaps some of the party of zealots may reason differently about my reforms.

I have a hard task before me; I am to reduce the army of monks, fashion men out of *fakirs*, before whose shaven head the rabble reverently kneels, and who have gained a greater dominion over the heart of the citizen, than any thing which could make an impression on the human mind. Adieu.

Vienna, February, 1781.

To Cardinal Herzan, Imperial Minister at Rome.

My dear Cardinal,—Since I ascended the throne, and have worn the first diadem of the world, I have made philosophy the law-giver of my empire.

In accordance with its logic, Austria will receive a new form, the importance of the *Ulemas* will be restrained, and the rights of the crown regain their dignity. I must remove from the sphere of religion some things, which never belonged there.

Since I despise superstition and the Sadducees, I will free my people from them. To this end I will dismiss monks, break up their cloisters, and subject them to the bishops of their diocese.

In Rome they will call this an invasion of the rights of God; I well know they will exclaim, the glory of Israel is fallen; and complain that I take from the people their tribunes, and draw a dividing line between religion and philosophy; but they will be still more angry, that I undertake all this without asking leave of the servant of the servants of God.

To these things we must attribute the decline of the human understanding. A servant of the altar will not acknowledge that the state does but confine him to his proper sphere, in leaving him no employment but the gospel, and in preventing by law the children of Levi from possessing a monopoly of human reason.

The principles of the monastic life, from the days of Pachomius to our own, have been diametrically opposed to the light of reason; they proceed from the esteem of their foundations to the adoration of them; and thus we see revived in them the Israelites, who went to Bethel to adore golden calves.

I will take care that the building, which I have erected for futurity, shall be permanent.

Vienna, October, 1781.

In the following letter to Van Swieten, Joseph perhaps betrays a passion to be esteemed in his turn as an author.

My dear Friend,—I hardly know how some monarchs have fallen into the folly of acquiring literary distinction; and seek a sort of greatness in making verses, or drawing a sketch for a theatre, to be a *pendant* to the works of Palladio.

True, I perceive the obligation of kings to be not wholly unacquainted in the empire of science; but I deem it wholly unnecessary for a monarch to pass his time in writing madrigals.

The Margrave of Brandenburg took the lead in a royal sect, which is occupied in writing memoirs, poems, and essays on various subjects. The Empress of Russia followed the fashion, read Voltaire, and wrote poetry; Stanislaus Lesczinsky, and the King of Sweden, confined themselves to private letters.

The causes of all this are as strange, as the products of their minds. The King of Prussia began his academic employments at Rheinsberg, where his father exiled him, and where he could hardly maintain a state equal to that of a colonel in my armies. When he came to be king, he continued his learned occupations; at once a host of French champions gathered round him, and sung his victories in Silesia; that is, the conquest of a country, which had two regiments of infantry for its garrison, and which he overrun with 40,000 men. Afterwards the passion for making verses drove him to establish a friendship with Voltaire, which was, however, interrupted, renewed, broken off, renewed again and continued to the death of the watchmaker of Ferney.

The Empress of Russia undertook it from pride; she endeavored to shine in every department of fame; the rest was done by time and circumstances, friendship and passion, and a portion of vanity to boot.

Stanislaus was a good sort of a man; he saw visions like the Abbé de St. Pierre, and had it been possible, would from his Luneville have commanded peace to all the earth. His Majesty of Stockholm had other motives; Gustavus was treated in Paris with great attention, and after his return wrote such tender letters to Paris and to the court of Versailles, that they were compelled to pay him the compliment, that besides being a king he was a very amiable private man.

Such are my views on these matters. To me neither the great Grecians, nor Romans are unknown; I am conversant with the history of the German empire, and with that of my dominions in

a special manner ; but my time has never allowed me to manufacture epigrams or hammer out Vaudevilles. I have read, to gain instruction ; I have travelled, to enlarge my knowledge ; and in giving assistance to men of letters, I do them a greater service than if I should employ them to aid me in turning out sonnets at a writing desk. Adieu.

Vienna, December, 1780.

Compare the instructions given by Napoleon to his brother, the King of Holland, with the following letter, addressed by Joseph to his youngest brother, on becoming Elector of Cologne.

You know your duties perfectly, my dear Prince ! As a Mentor I have nothing to say ; but as a friend, permit me to make you acquainted with your new dignity.

As elector, you are one of the first princes of the empire. *Forget that the Emperor is your brother, and that you are a Prince of my house ; sacrifice yourself wholly to the country and to your people.*

The letter to the magistrates of Buda, is too boastful.

I thank the magistracy and the citizens for the intended honor of a statue, to be erected in one of their public squares. To facilitate the transaction of business, and the better to oversee the offices of the kingdom, I have concentrated them in Buda, and the city thus accidentally acquires some advantages ; but for this such an honor is really not merited.

Yet when I shall have made the Hungarians recognise the true relations between king and subjects ; when I shall have removed all spiritual and all civil abuses ; when I shall have awakened activity and industry, made commerce flourishing, and provided the land from one end to the other with roads and navigable canals, as I hope to do ; if then the nation will erect a monument to my honor, I may perhaps have deserved and will then gratefully accept it.

Vienna, June, 1784.

Two letters will illustrate his views of the rights of noblemen.

To the Chancellor of Hungary.

The privileges and liberties of a nobility or a nation, in all countries and republics of the world, consist not in the right of contributing nothing to the public burdens ; on the contrary, they bear more than any other class, as in England and Holland ; but those privileges consist solely in this, that they may impose

on themselves the burdens required by the state and the common advantage, and by their consent take the lead in the increase of the taxes. The liberty of persons is carefully to be distinguished from that of possessions ; in respect of which the proprietors represent not the nobleman, but simply the cultivator or the grazier, and in cities the citizen and consumer, in the highway and on the passage, the traveller merely and the passenger ; in which cases, for the sake of preserving the free competition that alone makes the system useful, they must be put on an equal footing, according to their possessions, with all other citizens and inhabitants.

Vienna, July, 1786.

To a Lady.

Madam,—I do not comprehend the obligations of a monarch, to give an office to one of his subjects because he is a nobleman. A man may be the son of a general, without the least talents for an officer ; a cavalier of good family, without having any other merits than that by the sport of fortune he has become a nobleman.

I pity you, madam, that your son is fit neither for an officer, nor for a statesman, nor for a priest ;—in short, that he is nothing but a nobleman, and that with his whole soul.

I hope you are impartial enough to see the reasons that have compelled me to a decision, which will perhaps be disagreeable to you, but which I have considered necessary. Adieu, madam.

August 4, 1787.

We close our extracts with two of the letters in which the Emperor gives his own character, and enters upon the defence of his administration.

To a Lady.

Madam,—You know my character ; you know that I choose the society of ladies only for recreation after business ; and that I have never sacrificed my principles to the fair sex. I listen to their recommendations but seldom, and then only when the object of them is a worthy man, who at any rate would not have long remained unknown to me.

Two of your sons are already established ; the elder, not yet twenty years old, is a captain of cavalry in my army ; and the younger receives of the Elector, my brother, a canonicate in Cologne. What will you have more ? Ought not the first already to be a general, and the second to have a bishoprick ?

It is a duty to be upright at court, severe in the field, stoical without harshness, and magnanimous without weakness, and by

just actions to win even the esteem of enemies ; such are my sentiments, madam.

Vienna, 1787.

To one of his Friends.

My Friend,—Because there have been Neros and a Dionysius, who went beyond the proper limits of their power ; because there have been tyrants who have abused the force, which destiny put into their hands, is it therefore reasonable, under the pretext of anxiety to preserve the rights of a nation for the future, that a prince should have all possible obstacles thrown in the way of measures, which have no other object, than the welfare and advantage of his subjects?

Since the commencement of my reign, I have at all times endeavored to conquer the prejudices against my rank ; have taken pains to win the confidence of the nations under my sway ; and since I ascended the throne, I have often given proofs, that the welfare of my subjects is my passion ; that to satisfy it I shun no labors, no pains, and I may add, no torments, and that I carefully consider the means, which may bring me nearer to the designs which I have proposed ; and nevertheless in my reforms I every where meet with opposition from those, of whom I had least expected it.

As a monarch, I do not deserve the distrust of my subjects ; as ruler of a vast realm, I must have the whole extent of my dominions before my eyes ; this I embrace at a glance, and cannot always have regard to the separate voices of single provinces, which consider only their own narrow circle.

My private good is only a chimera, and while on the one side I abandon it as a sacrifice to my country, I can in return participate in the general welfare ! But how many are aware of this !

If I were unacquainted with the duties of my station, if I were not morally convinced, that I am destined by Providence to bear my diadem with all the weight of obligations, which are imposed upon me with it, disgust and discontent with my lot, and the desire not to exist, would be the sensations, which would force themselves on my mind. But I know my heart ; I am inwardly convinced of the honesty of my intentions, and hope that when I shall be no more, posterity will more reasonably, justly, and impartially investigate, prove, and pass sentence on what I have done for my people.

Vienna, October, 1787.

Having by these copious citations, put the reader in possession of Joseph's own views, we have a little to add on the character of his administration. It was his greatest fault, that he

would himself govern ; that he considered his own will the main-spring of the administration, and desired to find in others only willing instruments to execute his commands.

The talent of Joseph for the internal administration of his states resulted from his wakeful curiosity, his extensive acquisitions, his untiring activity, and his earnest zeal for the prompt execution of his schemes. Nor can it be denied, that he was just, except when justice would have required the abandonment of a favorite plan ; and that he sincerely wished to develop to the utmost the resources of his hereditary states.

He came to the throne, determined to have but one uniform system throughout his wide dominions. He forgot, that a weak mind is apt to demand such a uniformity, while a strong understanding knows where and when to allow the existence of differences. In the attempt to reduce all things to one standard, to equalize all burdens, to establish but one mode of transacting business in states, as various in language and customs as in hereditary privileges, Joseph was engaged in a contest with the prejudices of centuries and the rooted habits of his time. Irremediable difficulties presented themselves to impede his scheme. The monarch grew impatient and wavered. Throngs of remonstrants crowded round his person ; all were freely admitted ; complaints increased and were listened to ; and modifications of his early measures ensued. These modifications could but increase the evil ; and render the uncertainty greater than before. The confusion grew worse. This excited the irascible prince to insist on the execution of his decrees by force. But violence could not reach the difficulty, which lay in the habits and character of his subjects ; while it still further alienated the affections of those, whose condition he wished to improve. Then the Emperor receded. Upon this the factious triumphed, and grew more factious than before ; at last all respect for authority was gone, revolt ensued, the Emperor fairly knew not what to do, and the best disposed of his people were left in a strange uncertainty between the ancient usage and the reform. Such is philanthropy without firmness. So much do the sterner virtues of fortitude and justice surpass the milder merits of benevolence and mercy.

The causes of the little success, that attended the reforms of Joseph, are to be looked for partly in himself, and partly in the nations which he ruled. *They* were unripe for the rapid course of change ; *he* was unskilful in his manner of urging im-

provement on those whom he desired to influence ; and, generally, was deficient in tact, in his intercourse with others. The officers of government, who were necessarily made his agents, in part did not comprehend his system ; many doubted if he had a feasible system ; some were, from their interest or prejudices, secretly, but vigorously opposed to it ; and thus it came to pass, that even to the Emperor himself, his innovating measures, which were to break down the bulwarks of fanaticism, and establish the empire of philosophy, remained in a great measure but a mass of waste paper, filed away in the bureaus of state. Frederic II. was irresistible in the steady firmness, with which he moved towards the execution of his boldest measures in the internal administration ; and would have been inexorably severe against any, who might have attempted to thwart his purpose. But Joseph, precipitate in issuing his edicts, knew not how to overcome opposition ; and contented himself with addressing to all the officers of state a sort of imperial homily, a mixture of eloquence, commonplace sentiments, sound philosophy, and dictatorial haughtiness. It probably produced no more effect, than the invectives of an irritable man, uttered in a moment of excitement. After all, there is no such thing in nature as *absolute*, though there may be *irresponsible*, power.

The Emperor's passion for reform was so strong, that he went far beyond the most extraordinary performances in excessive legislation of any of our state legislatures. A set of resolutions, aiming at a change in the fundamental laws of the country, would require of Congress a six weeks' discussion ; Joseph, within the course of three years, issued at least two hundred and seventy six laws of a general nature, and obligatory on all his dominions ; while the number of special edicts for the immediate territory of Austria was too great to be readily counted.

The contrast between the state of intelligence prevailing in Austria, and the culture in the neighboring Protestant countries was apparent even to Maria Theresa. 'How comes it,' said she one day to a Protestant (Von Moser) in her employ, 'how comes it that clear heads are more common among you Protestants?' 'It is' replied he, 'because we put more windows in the house.' Maria Theresa was a devotee, though a woman of benevolent feelings ; but Joseph proceeded with great, yet too hasty philanthropy to give liberty to thought, and repeal the heavy penalties which prevailed against dissent.

To the citizens of the United States, in which there is no

established sect, the idea of toleration is unacceptable, because it implies subordination, and is a mark of inferiority and weakness. To those, who are not Catholics, and yet live in a Catholic country, the word seems fraught with the richest blessings of religious liberty. An edict, proclaiming unlimited toleration, was among the first measures adopted by Joseph, in a spirit of unprejudiced justice. He also viewed it as a wise political act, which might transfer to his dominions the industry of Protestant countries, and cause intelligence to spring from the unrestrained conflict of opinions.

But the praise, which is awarded to Joseph, requires limitation. The Emperor, like most of his contemporaries in Europe, did not exactly know how much toleration included. His edict allowed the free confession of opinions without any civil inability, consequent on dissent; and the unrestrained exercise of public worship, wherever a dissenting parish could provide the necessary funds. Now the former severity of the government had induced many to conceal their sentiments; and the number of Anti-catholics, claiming the benefit of the edict, was great beyond all expectation. The Catholic clergy interfered, and attributed the numerous secessions from their parishes to a wavering love of novelty and change. So the tolerant Joseph enacted, that there should be a limit of time, within which all who had been esteemed Catholics, but who wished to pass for such no longer, might report themselves; after the expiration of the time thus fixed, every one, who had apparently been a Catholic, and had not signified any wish to the contrary, should ever after and at all hazards remain of the Roman church. Those who reported themselves, however, were to be instructed in the Catholic faith, and converted, if possible; if they remained firm, they might have permission to join another sect. Power being on the side of the clergy, the instruction, which was given, consisted often in threats, abuse, and personal violence. It was now right for the Protestants to complain. Joseph listened and issued new orders. The minds of the people were unsettled, and neither party had a distinct understanding of its condition.

The Catholic clergy complained, that their revenues were impaired. The Emperor ordered, that taxes should be paid by the Dissenters to the Catholic priesthood, as before. The Protestants were thus left too poor to provide themselves with suitable teachers, and a multiplicity of sects seemed about to

ensue. Joseph began with absolute toleration; but now he became provoked, that plebeian ignorance should venture to think for itself, and henceforward was willing to tolerate none but Lutherans and Calvinists.

There existed a singular sect, of which the members were called Deists, or Abrahamites. They were the relics of the early reforms in Bohemia. When the spirit of persecution raged against all who were suspected of heresy, the civil authority had taken from them their bibles and Protestant books of devotion, and they were thus left to profess Christianity, independently of any written documents. Hence their name, since, like Abraham, they had no Scriptures. Such an attachment to the opinions of their fathers, secretly passing from one generation to another, among an unenlightened peasantry, unsupported by books, visible union, or external forms, seems to us a most remarkable phenomenon in the history of the human mind. These poor men now came forward and claimed to be tolerated. Their case merited from our enlightened and philanthropic Emperor the benefit of a special edict. 'Whoever reports himself as a Deist, shall, without inquiry, at once receive twenty-four blows *ad posteriora*,' (we quote the words of the law) 'and the punishment shall be repeated as often as he so reports himself, not because he is a Deist, but because he says he is that, of which he does not know the meaning.' Such is toleration. Under the most severe penalties, these Abrahamites were ordered to rank themselves with one of the three great sects. Otherwise their children were taken from them, and they themselves, without respect to age; or sex, separated from each other, exiled from their ancient homes, subjected to the worst public services, or banished to Transylvania and the Bannat, where, from the proximity of Turkey, a sort of Babel of religions was licensed.

In giving civil liberties to the Jews,* Joseph encountered fewer difficulties. He began with a general rule, which took from them the heavy restrictions, under which they had been permitted to exist. In doing justice to them, the Emperor made their condition in his dominions more favorable than it

* 'Den Priester rufst du wieder zur Jüngerschaft
Des grossen Stifters; machest zum Unterthan
Den jochbeladen Landman; machst den
Juden zum Menschen,'

says Klopstock, in an Ode, of which this first verse is the best.

was elsewhere. His subjects complained, that the imperial justice operated as a bounty to attract Jews from all quarters. He, therefore, made some modifications in his first act, which, however, still left the condition of that nation far better than it had been before. The example of justice was soon imitated by neighboring states.

The most difficult task, which Joseph undertook in regulating the religious concerns of his states, was the reform of abuses in the established hierarchy. He was determined to set bounds to the influence of the Pope, and allow him no voice, except in cases of doctrine.

A beginning was made with the monastic orders. The members of them were commanded to discontinue their dependence on the superior of their orders, and to submit themselves to the bishop of their diocese in matters of religion, but in other concerns to the regular civil authorities. The monks replied, that the monastic vow was binding upon them, and that its obligation could not be dispensed with ; of course the superior must still be obeyed. To end the discussion, Joseph abolished all monasteries and nunneries, of which the members led the idle, contemplative life. At that time the Austrian monarchy contained two thousand and sixty-nine cloisters, and sixty-three thousand persons, attached to them. The cloisters* were all broken up, and the nuns and monks turned on the world, except such as were engaged in some directly useful employment. He also forbade religious processions, attempted to restrain superstition, and prohibited the mummeries, usual in the church festivals.

In all these measures, Joseph proceeded without any reference to the wishes of the Pope ; and such danger seemed to threaten the interests of the church, that the Sovereign Pontiff, having full confidence in the power of his eloquence, determined to appear personally at Vienna, and to check the progress of change by an attempt at direct interference. It is not consistent with our limits to explain how unavailing the journey proved to be ; Kaunitz was far too wary, and Joseph far too vain, to be circumvented by the remonstrances, the eloquence, or the entreaties of the illustrious guest. Pius VI. was called by the women the handsome Pope ; his fine voice and

* Brissot, in his letter to his constituents, is bitterly unjust to Joseph, and insists on inventing for him unworthy motives.

stately person made him peculiarly suited for display on the great days of ceremony ; his dress was always arranged with scrupulous neatness, and a careful rehearsal preceded his appearance in any of his most important functions. Such a pope might charm the fashionables of Vienna ; throngs of devout admirers crowded to secure the benefit of a blessing, so gracefully distributed, and, for the accommodation of the pious, his slipper was daily left in the antichamber to receive the kisses of the orthodox. But the impenetrable secrecy, and the phlegmatic vanity of Kaunitz left no opportunity for opening a successful negotiation ; and Joseph was only gratified in his self-love, that now for the first time for more than a thousand years, for the first time since the days of Charlemagne, the head of the church had repaired, and almost as a suppliant, to the Imperial Court. So little influence was exercised, that the very day, when Pius on his return had been accompanied by the Emperor as far as the convent of Mariabrun, and had there received the most tender demonstrations of regard at the farewell, which was taken in the presence of the people, was selected to announce to the monks the abolition of that cloister.

In addition to the bitterness of having displayed his inability to resist the encroachment of the Emperor, the Roman Pontiff had now to regret the sacrifice of the dignity of his office. The disputes continued, and at last a communication from Rome gave so much offence to Joseph, that he returned it without any written answer, but with the verbal message, that he presumed the document had been forged by some ill-disposed person, and had received the papal signature without having been read. The Emperor was now ready for a formal rupture with the Roman See, and for proclaiming the entire independence of his states in religious concerns. He was prevented from doing so by no respect for the church, but by a consideration of the difficulties, which would have attended such a measure, and which would have diverted him from other favorite schemes.

In his intercourse with foreign nations, Joseph is not always entitled to the praise of good intentions. It was he, rather than his mother, who was a partner in the plan for dividing Poland ; and in his intercourse with Holland, Bavaria, and the Porte, he manifested a restless passion for aggrandizement, which, by its very intensity, defeated itself, leading him to pounce

continually on the weakest of his neighbors, and drawing him off as often by the prospect of some more alluring game. In none of his negotiations with foreign powers does he appear in a less favorable light, than in the contest with Holland. Ancient treaties refused to his Belgian provinces the privileges of foreign commerce. Joseph asserted for his subjects their natural rights, in virtue of the intrinsic justice of the demand, and because the ancient treaties had lost their force by the effect of subsequent transactions. If there was justice in the demand, there was no palliation for renouncing the privilege anew in consideration of a gratuity in money. As a financial speculation, it was ignoble. It was making the weak pay for being left in peace.

The war against Turkey was unwise, and, we must add, unjust ; and for it Joseph had to atone by the loss of all military reputation, and of his health, which gave way under a consumption, engendered by the fatigues and exposures of his first campaign. 'To be a soldier,' he said in his farewell to the army, 'was always his most decided propensity.' Since he attained no eminence in war, he passed a severe sentence on himself, in avowing his predilection.

The early education of Joseph was unequal. The history of the states, which he was to govern, was taught him in a manner the least suited to benefit him ; and his mother would have held herself deficient in her duty, had she not provided carefully for his instruction in religion, according to the notions of a bigotted priesthood. But he also acquired, besides the German, which he wrote uncommonly well, the French, the Italian, and the Hungarian languages ; and by means of the Bohemian he was somewhat familiar with those of the northeast of Europe. He seems also to have possessed a lively curiosity, which was subsequently strengthened by travelling, and by frequent intercourse with intelligent men. It is said, to the honor of his nationality, that he insisted on the use of German at his court, though his mother had used, and the Austrian nobility still preferred, the French.

In domestic life he was unhappy. His first wife, whom he tenderly loved, died in about three years after marriage, on the birth of her second child. His second wife he never loved, and she did not live to bear his indifference long. The only surviving daughter of his first wife died when about eight years old, and Joseph had now nothing but his country, on which to

concentrate his affections. He had consented against his will, to his second marriage, from reasons of state ; but being again left a widower, he faithfully cherished the recollections of his youthful happiness, and for more than twenty years he was not for a single day under the control of woman. Neither had he any political favorites. He was fond of his brothers and sisters, and took a lively interest in their domestic concerns ; but he was far above all *nepotism*.

In his personal expenses he was sparing, that his finances might the better bear the cost of public improvements. His economy was one cause of the hostility of many, who had expected abundance from his munificence. His dress and personal manners were remarkable for their simplicity.

His pleasures were the theatre, travelling, and music. In the latter he could have been no connoisseur. A story is told in the life of Mozart, that the Emperor, after hearing one of that great master's very difficult works, said goodnaturedly to him, 'Very fine, very fine ; but you have put into your composition terribly many notes.' 'Just exactly enough, your Majesty,' said the offended musician, 'and not a single note too many.'

As a man of business, he was of untiring diligence. Few private men could be compared with him. It was the rule of Kaunitz, that most extraordinary compound of greatness and folly, never to do any thing himself, which he could possibly get done by others. Joseph's system was the reverse. He was for doing every thing himself. He slept on straw till his last illness ; and rose at five in summer, and before six in winter. His day was all labor ; he gave himself no respite ; he retired to rest just before midnight ; he was always temperate, and at all times ready to give his mind to public concerns.

Sensitive as he was, he could forgive opposition. He was accustomed to read the bitter strictures of the discontented on his administration ; and he really seems always to have believed himself to be doing what was right, at least what was most for the general advantage.

Joseph's reign continued hardly ten years ; he had occasion to learn many a severe and painful lesson ; perhaps had his life been spared, in the great school of experience he might have acquired moderation, and through trials and misfortunes have made his way to tranquillity. He died at a moment the most unfortunate for his fame. Yet the Prince, who in nine

years abolished vassalage, reformed the penal code, improved the whole system of national instruction, established the means of popular education, provided by a tariff* for the protection of the Austrian system, colonized desert parts of his territories, introduced the liberty of the press, proclaimed toleration in matters of religion, turned Jews into men and citizens, abolished all useless monasteries, and founded hospitals and many endowments for the unfortunate ; such a prince can bear to have his faults exhibited, and yet preserve a claim to esteem.

If Joseph was philanthropic, he was in no less degree unfortunate. His subjects were so much accustomed to hear the clanking of their chains, that they distrusted every effort for their relief. Unhappy as a husband, unhappy as a father, unhappy as a ruler, his last hours acquire a sublime, tragic interest. Like the Hamlet of the poet, destiny seemed to have called upon him for the accomplishment of purposes beyond his strength, and he was too weak to gain the victory in a contest, which he had too much moral courage to shun.

There are many anecdotes related of Joseph, which represent him in a very amiable light. At Paris, in the midst of the most splendid regal entertainments, he would be found apart in a remote room, quietly conversing with some man of decided merit. Being asked if the routine of dissipation did not exhaust him, he replied, 'I do not burn my candle at both ends ; it is that which will save me.' In the kingdom of Wirtemberg, there is a particularly pleasant road, made by the side of the great highway from Stuttgart to a neighboring palace of the royal family ; a large sign, like one of the boards by our bridges, indicating the rates of toll, declares that no plebeian wheels may roll upon it, and that the owner of a carriage must be of at least princely rank, or he cannot be allowed to raise a dust on the patrician pavement. In the same spirit the nobility of Vienna prayed, that the fine public walks in the suburbs of that city, might be closed, except to those of their rank. 'If,' answered Joseph, 'I would walk among none but my equals in birth and rank, I should have to stay with my ancestors in the vaults of the church of the Capuchins. I prefer men of virtue and talent to those who can only count princes among their progenitors.' 'His dress,' it was said of him in the early campaign against Frederic, 'is the dress of a soldier, his wardrobe

* His tariff was an injudicious one.

that of a lieutenant, his recreation labor, his life constant motion.' He was of undoubted bravery; and never shunned personal danger. 'How can I complain of dangers, when I see my Emperor's crown as much exposed as my cap?' said a grenadier, in a commendable antithesis for one of his rank.

There is a story related by Coxe, in which the Emperor, who often went about *incognito*, plays the part of another James Fitz-James, according to the lively picture of the Scottish bard. The daughter of an officer's widow made him the confidant of the unjust neglect, which their sufferings had to sustain from the Emperor. He promises, if she will go to the palace, to be her intercessor. The poor girl gratefully accepts his offer, and is overwhelmed with awe, when she finds that she has been abusing the Emperor to his own face. The generous monarch forgives and relieves. As a further proof of a liberal spirit, it is related, that Joseph, having inherited from his father, as a private patrimony, twenty-two millions of guilders in Austrian paper-money, consigned the whole to the flames. When in the Turkish war he had covered himself with shame and defeat, he sent Laudon to take his place. 'Go, dear Laudon,' said he, 'set my blunders to rights; I give you full powers.' We at least like the honesty of his answer on being asked his opinion of the revolution of our fathers. 'I am a royalist by trade.'

Frederic II. of Prussia, happening one day to see that a libel upon him, which some discontented person had affixed to the wall, was placed too high to be conveniently read, took it down himself and placed it lower. In this he showed good humor and good sense. We are not sure, that Joseph's imitation of this little matter, was a mark of taste or ability. He had assigned a Roman Catholic church as a place of worship to the Lutherans and Calvinists. A writing was one morning found on the door, full of bitter invective against the Emperor; he ordered the paper to be printed and sold for the benefit of the Protestant service. This indicated petulance and irritability, rather than greatness of mind.

The liberal principles of Joseph seem in direct contrast with his high birth, and his bigotted education. But the anomaly is explained by the influence of the example of Frederic. The glory of the veteran monarch naturally attracted the admiration of the aspiring Joseph, who was led to contemplate with wonder the military kingdom, which, with a moderate territory

and population, yet held the balance of power in Europe. The younger monarch determined to imitate, but he failed to bear in mind the difference between his own dominions and those of Frederic. In Prussia there existed no powerful nobility to watch the motions of the monarch; no ancient families, whose influence and grandeur were hereditary; no venerated and opulent hierarchy, having alike the sanction of time, of superstition, and of cherished religious faith; no jealously defended constitutions, securing to the several provinces of the monarchy their respective privileges, and endeared by the recollections of patriotism. The kingdom of Prussia admitted of unity in the administration, and contained within itself no obstacles to the system of military despotism. But Joseph found his hereditary dominions forming a kind of federative state, and he wished to give them an absolute unity, corresponding to his theory of an equal administration. He came to rule over nations, that spoke various tongues, and he thought by an imperial decree, to change the language of common life and of the law; he undertook to denationalize the strongest portion of his realms, and to take from the millions of Hungary, the tongue, which was associated in their minds with the best days of their early history, and with their proudest recollections. He saw that the usurpations of the church had by degrees acquired within his territory an authority, which claimed to be independent of the laws of the land; and he hoped by a series of edicts, unsupported by popular opinion, to overturn an established state of things, identified with all that his subjects venerated and feared. He forgot his relative position, and the reciprocal influence of circumstances, popular caprices, an obstinate regard for what was endeared by antiquity, and the vague but powerful influence of a superstitious faith. The more devotedly he sacrificed himself for his subjects, the more earnestly he gave up pleasure, tranquillity, and health, to the furtherance of his objects, the more critical did his own situation become. He was engaged in a struggle with the times; and his destiny found in them too powerful an antagonist. The more impetuously and warmly he rushed to the contest, the more unguardedly did he lay himself open to successful attacks. His imprudent exertions made opposition almost universal. His mother, a few weeks before his birth, at a time when her states were overrun by the French and Prussian armies, had said in her anguish, that in her wide inheritance she knew not the city, where she

could await her delivery in security. When Joseph came to die, he could have said, that he knew not the town in his realms, where his last moments would not be embittered by the din of clamorous remonstrance. The famous Oxenstiern of Sweden used to say, 'that he never took a care with him to his night's rest,' so exact was he in business, so serene in temper. Joseph never knew the enjoyment of rest in this world; and when he came to prepare for his last sleep, which nature renders deep, anxieties crowded round him to the last; so that a few hours before his death, he could beg for no more than this epitaph on his tomb, 'Here rests a Prince, whose designs were pure, but who had the misfortune to see all his enterprises shipwrecked.'

We may add, that the present Emperor of Austria was the favorite nephew and *élève* of Joseph.

ART. II.—*American Literature.* An Article in the 99th Number of the Edinburgh Review.

It is always more or less provoking to be made the subject of abuse and sarcasm with or without just cause; and it is painful enough to see the character of the relations between two great countries vitiated by the paltry prejudices of a few obscure scribblers; but it is nevertheless curious, as a matter of philosophical study, and at times sufficiently amusing to mark the influence of national pride and jealousy on the tone of the British periodical writers in regard to the United States. We have already on several preceding occasions, adverted to this subject, and we rarely open a review, magazine, or newspaper from the mother country, without observing some new effect of the same cause. As regularly as their successive numbers issue from the press, each and all of them continue to carry on this—as they probably conceive—very pious warfare, according to their various measures of ability and habitual modes of handling the topics that come before them. The Quarterly reviles us, the Edinburgh sneers at us, Blackwood bullies us,*

*The writer of a late article in Blackwood's Magazine, entitled 'Wellington at Cadiz,' containing an account of an entertainment given to his hero upon a visit to that city, goes out of his way to introduce the following episode, which we extract as a specimen of the tone of